

SOMERSET COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION
Thursday, Dec. 1, 2022, Meeting Minutes – Hybrid Live/Virtual Zoom Meeting

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Commission Past President Don Esposito in compliance with the Open Public Meeting Notice Act, Chapter 231, PL 1975.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Roll Call

Commissioners: Don Esposito, Kathy Faulks, Jonathan Hress, Dennis Quinlan, Edwin Scannell, Marge Sullivan **EXCUSED:** Rory Britt, Donnetta Bishop-Johnson, Natalie Pineiro,

Staff: Walter Lane, Thomas D’Amico, Kaitlin Bundy, Robert Meyer

Advisory Members: Aldo Adiazola, Sean Blinn, Brian Faulks, Rose Kopf, Kathleen Palmer, **EXCUSED:** Hilary Klimek, Sharon Onderko, Lori Siqueira

Members of the Public: Freeholder Peter Palmer

Commissioner Liaison: Deputy Director Melanie Marano

IV. Approval of November 6, 2022, Minutes

Motion to accept the minutes made by Jonathan Hress and seconded by Kathy Faulks. Passed.

V. Correspondence

1. Kaitlin Bundy received the Link Newsletter from the Raritan-Millstone Heritage Alliance.
2. Kaitlin Bundy received a letter from the Somerset County Historical Society requesting assistance in locating signs that have gone missing and how to fund their replacement. Kaitlin Bundy and Tom D’Amico will reply with further information including how the organization may obtain approvals from the Department of Transportation and specifics on funding sources.

VI. Staff Reports/Old Business

The following reports were made by Tom D’Amico:

Historic Preservation Grant Program. All 2021 Historic Preservation Grant Program contracts have been executed by the grant recipients except for one municipality. Staff has had recent discussions with Somerville Borough concerning signage for their Borough Hall restoration project. The 2023 Historic Preservation Grant Program Application and Guidelines will be sent out at the end of January or early February.

County Preservation Projects. Van Horne House: The County Public Works Department continues to work on the east wing of the Van Horne House in Bridgewater (Phase II). Phase II should be completed within two weeks. Phase III of the project, which will begin next spring, will include the windows and the back porch.

Stained Glass Windows

The State Historic Preservation Office has approved the Authorization to Proceed Application for Phase IV of the stained glass window project. The County is continuing to ascertain the overall County Contractor.

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Baker-Duderstadt Farm

Staff has received the first draft of the Baker-Duderstadt Historic Structures Report, from Connolly & Hickey Historical Architects, and have made a few minor comments to the consultants. It was noted that the report appeared to be well written.

Van Doren Howe Property

The Consultants have not submitted a draft Historic Structures Report to the County Historical Society which is leasing the site from the County. Staff has received a request for reallocation of funds from a previous grant. Staff will be discussing this.

County Owned Historic Sites Survey

All field work by consultants Mills & Schnoering has been completed as well as Phase One of the report. The next phase is underway, which will look at how other Counties deal with their historic resources.

The following reports were made by Kaitlin Bundy:

Local Arts Program Grant. The Local Arts Program Grant (LAP), are funds the Commission receives annually from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts to primarily re-grant out to local non-profits and municipalities.

2022 Grants: Final report forms were sent out to all 2022 re-grantees in early November and are due back January 10, 2023. Staff is working with all of the organizations to help them complete this final stage of the grant so that final payments can be released.

2023 Grant: The Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission received 23 applications for the 2023 grant cycle totaling over \$580,000 in grant requests. Due to the number of conflicts of interest, a Committee of Cultural & Heritage Commissioners was formed to review and discuss the 2023 LAP grant recommendations. The committee met on November 16th and staff has compiled their comments together with the Independent Peer Panel's comments. Staff is working to secure a date to bring these recommendations to the County Commissioners for final approval.

Cooperative Marketing Grant: 2023 CMP Grant. Staff is currently working on the contract paperwork for the fiscal year 2023 Cooperative Marketing grant. The Division of Travel and Tourism has awarded the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission \$10,050 to additionally advertise and market the 2023 Journey Through the Past Event.

NEA ARP Sub-granting for Local Arts Agencies Grant: Staff have sent out contracts to all six organizations that were awarded an NEA ARP grant. Executed contracts are due back in mid-January of 2023. Each organization was awarded a grant of \$25,000.00:

- Frontline Arts
- Center for Contemporary Art
- American Theater Group
- Music in the Somerset Hills

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- Ukrainian History and Education Center
- Light Opera of New Jersey

Technical Assistance Workshop: The November 15, 2022 emergency preparedness technical assistance workshop was canceled and staff is working to reschedule the workshop for early 2023. The workshop will cover the disaster planning process, the contents of a disaster plan and business continuity issues. Information will also be provided about resources to help with planning in order to protect people and property.

The following reports were made by Robert Meyer:

County History Partnership Program Grant: The County History Partnership Program Grant (CHPP), are funds the Commission receives annually from the New Jersey State Historical Commission to primarily re-grant out to local non-profits and municipalities.

2022 Grants: Final report forms were sent out to all 2022 re-grantees in early November and are due back January 10, 2023. Staff is working with all of the organizations to help them complete this final stage of the grant so that final payments can be released.

2023 Grant: The Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission received 11 applications for the 2023 grant cycle totaling over \$325,000 in grant requests. Due to the number of conflicts of interest, a Committee of Cultural & Heritage Commissioners was formed to review and discuss the 2023 CHPP grant recommendations. The committee met on November 22nd and staff has compiled their comments together with the Independent Peer Panel's comments. Staff is working to secure a date to bring these recommendations to the County Commissioners for final approval.

Gallery: The Camera Naturalists Photo Club exhibit and The Woodturnings & Bird Carvings exhibit officially opened in the Cultural & Heritage Gallery on December 1, 2022. The Camera Naturalists exhibit features 33 works of photography which are displayed on the first floor of the County Administration Building. The Woodturnings & Bird Carvings exhibit features 16 pieces of carved wood which are displayed on the third floor of the County Administration Building. Both exhibits will run through January 17, 2023. The next gallery exhibit will feature artwork from ArtSee and will open on January 19, 2023.

Journey Through the Past: The 17th Annual Journey Through the Past took place on Saturday, October 8, 2022, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday, October 9, 2022, from Noon to 4:00 p.m. 32 historic sites participated, including the Replica of George Washington's revolutionary war tent on the Courthouse Green. 25 of the 32 sites have returned their feedback forms with visitor information. The total number of visitors for this year's Journey, from those 25 sites, is 2,963. This is more than double last year's total, which was 1,298. This is also an increase from the last pre-pandemic Journey in 2019, which had 2,877 visitors. Additionally, this year's Journey had visitors from 14 different counties outside of Somerset, 6 other states, and 5 other countries (Canada, Costa Rica, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom), with an approximate total of 565 visitors from outside Somerset County. In terms of website visits, this year there were 2,417 unique page views compared to last year's 3,395. The Story Map received 1,229 views this year, which is nearly double last year's total of 678 views.

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Staff has also received several compliments on this year's Journey, with many sites happy to be open in person again. A handout was provided with additional information, which can be sent via email upon request.

VII. New Business/Action Items

Announcements: Kaitlin Bundy announced that the Robert Meyer has been promoted to a new full time position as the Cultural and Heritage Commission's Administrative Coordinator starting December 1, 2022. In his new role, he will be supporting the daily operations of the Commission by providing administrative and program support. This is a new position for the Commission which Walter Lane was able to help facilitate the creation of. The Program Coordinator position is currently being advertised.

Kaitlin Bundy announced that Dennis Quinlan is not seeking reappointment to the Cultural & Heritage Commission and wished to thank Dennis for his service. Dennis expressed his gratitude to the Cultural & Heritage Commission and the Somerset County Board of County Commissioners for their help to the Borough of South Bound Brook and the Abraham Staats House through the years.

Other: Don Esposito noted the presence of former Freeholder Peter Palmer and thanked him for his service.

VIII. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Liaison: Commissioner Deputy Director Melanie Marano

1. Commissioner Marano thanked Dennis Quinlan for his service to the Cultural & Heritage Commission and announced that there is now an opening on the Cultural & Heritage Commission. Anyone interested is encouraged to submit a letter of interest explaining why they would want to serve as a Cultural & Heritage Commissioner.
2. Commissioner Marano stated that the Board of County Commissioners is already working with staff regarding the 250th Anniversary of American Independence.
3. Commissioner Marano announced that she was reelected in November and will return as the Cultural & Heritage Commission Liaison in 2023.

Cultural & Heritage Commissioner Comments

1. Kathy Faulks announced upcoming programs at the Abraham Staats House: "Holiday at the Abraham Staats House" on Saturday, December 3, and Sunday, December 4, from 1:00pm to 4:00pm, "Madrigal Singers of Franklin Township High School" on Saturday, December 3, 1:00pm to 2:00pm and 18th century "Candlelight Tour at the Abraham Staats House" on Saturday, December 3, 6:30pm to 7:30pm. <https://www.staatshouse.org>
2. On behalf of Paul Soltis, NJ Park Service Interpretive Specialist, Marge Sullivan thanked the Cultural & Heritage Commission and Somerset County Board of County Commissioners for writing letters of support for the Wallace House's recently funded grant application to the National Park Service FY2022 round of the Semiquincentennial grant program to update the Historic Structures

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Report along with restoration work on the Wallace House due to water and moisture damage, improve landscaping and improve ADA accessibility.

3. Marge Sullivan announced that the Holiday festivities at the Van Horn House would be the 2nd weekend of December.
4. Jonathan Hress was happy to note that the Journey Through the Past event was very successful.

IX. Advisory Committee Comments

1. Kathleen Palmer announced that Downtown Bernardsville, Inc. will host “Wonderland Weekend Events” to include “Holiday Lights Competition and Tour” on Thursday, December 1, a Night Market on Friday, December 2, from 5:00pm to 8:00pm, “Santa Photo Session” on Saturday, December 3, from 2:00pm to 5:00 pm, and the “Annual Cookie Crawl” on Sunday, December 4, from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm. <https://downtownbernardsville.org/#>.
2. Kathleen Palmer announced that The Friends of the Adult Day Center will host a Cookie Sale at the Presbyterian Church of Basking Ridge on Saturday, December 4. <https://www.atlantichealth.org/conditions-treatments/visiting-nurse/atlantic-visiting-nurse-fundraising/fundraising-events/cookie-sale.html>
3. Sean Blinn announced that the Jacobus Vanderveer House will host two events: A Cocktail Party on Friday, December 2, from 6:00pm to 9:00pm, and a Tree Lighting on Saturday, December 3, from 2:30pm to 5:30pm. <https://jvanderveerhouse.org>
4. Sean Blinn provided physical copies of the American Association for State and Local History’s “Making History at 250: The Field Guide for the Semiquincentennial” to share with the Commission.
5. Brian Faulks requested an update from Tom D’Amico on the Old Stone Bridge; the County is still working on negotiations with the owner.

X. Open Meeting to the Public
Announcements/Other News:

The next Cultural & Heritage Commission meeting will take place on Thursday, January 12, 2023. Kaitlin Bundy and Rory Britt will discuss the outcome of the Hybrid Live/Virtual Zoom Meeting and determine what the format of the January meeting will be.

XI. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Marge Sullivan and seconded by Jonathan Hress. Passed.
Adjournment 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Faulks, Secretary

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